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A SHORT
VIEW
OF THE

Controversy about EPISCOPACY,
AND OUR
CHURCH COMMUNION.

Containing Summarily the Grounds of our
Doctrine, and the Objections of our Ad-
versaries against them, severally Obviated
and reply'd to,

IN A
LETTER

To a Friend of the *Presbyterian Perswasion*,

IN THE
CITY of CHESTER.

By GIFFITH JONES, M.A. Rector of *Bodvary*.

The Third EDITION, with Additions.

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AND

CHURCH COMMUNION

Containing Summary of the Grounds of our
Dissatisfaction, and the Objections of our Ad-
versaries, against them, (together with)
and reply to

IN A

LETTER

To a Friend of the Dissenters, written

IN THE

CITY OF CHICHESTER

LONDON:

Printed for J. BATHURST, in the Strand, in the
Year 1751.





THE PREFACE.

IT is thought proper to Advertise the Reader, touching this small Tract, that it was occasion'd by an accidental Discourse, that pass'd in Company between the Author, and a Presbyterian Minister; which, least it might be represented by those that heard it, who were all of the same Perswasion, and therefore might be reasonably presum'd to pronounce upon it, in Favour of their own Party; He drew up the following Hints (being for the main, the same in Substance that he then urg'd) with a Design to impart them in Writing, to one of the Company, in Order to be communicated to the whole Society, that so they might be the better able to form a Judgment of what had pass'd in that short Debate. But having since bethought himself, that whatever he should offer in this Manner, would be still in danger of be-



iv P R E F A C E.

ing misrepresented, and being withal encourag'd to hope, that a brief Collection of this Kind, might prove of some use to others, as well as those it was first intended for; he, upon these Considerations, was induc'd to commit it to the Press: And now gives way to a Third Impression, to satisfy the Importunity of some Gentlemen that requested it of him, with the preceding Account of the Motives that determin'd him thus to appear in Publick.

J. G.







AN **SHORT**
VIEW
Of the Controversy about **EPISCOPACY,**
and our **CHURCH COMMUNION, &c.**

SIR,
TH E *two* general Heads in debate,
between Persons of your Per-
suasion, and us of the Establish'd
Church, being *Episcopacy*; and
our Church Communion. In thought, I could
not do you a more friendly Office, than by
endeavouring, to set you right in this Mat-
ter; and therefore have sent you the fol-
lowing Hints, upon each of these, in their
Order; in relation to which, the only re-
quest I have to make you is, *your careful,*
and Impartial perusal of them, which if you
do, my hope is through Gods Grace, they may
prove a Means to undeceive, and convince
you of your Error.

To



To begin with the *First*. Upon this Head, I shall endeavour to prove, that *Bishops*, as far as concerns the *Essentials* of their Office, *viz.* The Power of Ordination and spiritual Jurisdiction, are an Order Superior to *Presbyters*, by *Apostolical Institution*. And this appears to me, in the first Place, from the Government of the Church, in the primitive Ages, which was, all the Christian World over, *Episcopal*; and that, when there was no general Council to Establish, no Temporal Power to support it, as hath been abundantly * prov'd, and is generally own'd, by the ablest Advocates for *Presbytery*.

Now it cannot be conceiv'd, that all these several Churches, so far distant from each other, should consent in this one Form of Church Government, if they had not received it, as they did the Faith, from the Apostles. For it is morally impossible, that they should all conspire together, to alter the Primitive and Apostolick Constitution; and if they had, how came it to pass, that we find no Notice taken of it, and no opposition made against it, but all the *Presbyters* tamely parting with their right, and submitting to an Usurpation?

Indeed

* See Bishop Pearson's *Vindiciæ Ignatianæ*, p. 154. p. 2. and the Principles of the *Cyprianick Age* with the Vindication of it.



Indeed in *Doctrine*, Errors may, and have been introduced, by gaining insensibly upon weak and ignorant Minds; and sometimes have arriv'd to a considerable Head, before they were discover'd; but in *Government*, the Case is quite otherwise; for this being a publick Matter of *Fact*, and as such, visible and well known to all; When once Establish'd, no alteration could be wrought in it, at least without notorious Broils and Disturbances. For it is not to be suppos'd, that Persons impower'd by Christ, would willingly part with their Authority, or that the Bishops would Usurp it, in those Days of *Persecution*, when they, of all Men, were the most expos'd to the rage and fury of their merciless Enemies; or lastly, that the Christians of those best, and purest Ages, would be accessory to so vile a Forgery, without any *Temptation*, or temporal *Encouragement* to set about it.

Since therefore, these manifest Absurdities are otherwise unavoidable, it must necessarily follow, that *Bishops* are an *Order superior to Presbyters, by Apostolical Institution*: An Institution, equally binding in all Ages, as appears from the very nature of it; for one *essential Act* of it is *commissionating* Ministers in Christ's Church, which can only be done *effectually* in the Method that God hath prescrib'd for it, and for that reason must be *unalterable*, and this Office being
Originally

Originally instituted for the better Order and Government of the Church, the same reason equally holds for the continuance of it to the Worlds end.

And if the Episcopal Order, though of *Apostolical Institution*, may be alter'd by human Authority, Why may not that of Presbyters and Deacons be so too? Which would end in the utter Ruin, and Subversion of the Christian Church. Now admitting the truth of these Premises, *viz.* That the Episcopal Order is of *Apostolical Institution*, and that *perpetual*, and *unalterable*, the consequence is unavoidable; that it must derive it's Original from our Saviour.

For to have Issued out Commissions in his Name, and Constituted the principal Officers in his Church, without his Warrant and Authority, had been such a flagrant Instance of *Presumption*, *Treachery*, and *Usurpation*, that it wou'd be a manifest Injury to their *sacred Character*, to impute it to 'em, and we have this farther reason to derive Episcopacy from this Divine Original, that you must either necessarily admit of it, or resolve it into the Power of the People or the civil Magistrate; both which are suppositions equally Groundless, and Precarious, as being perfectly destitute of any Authority.

But to return. As it appears from the Government of the Church in the primitive Ages,

Ages, that Bishops are an Order Superior to Presbyters, by *Apostolical Institution*: So does this appear, Secondly, *from a constant Practice from it.*

For it is observable, that when ever a Presbyter was promoted to the Episcopal Office, he was always *Consecrated*, or *Ordain'd* for this End, the familiar Language of Antiquity, for the making of a *Bishop*; which plainly shews, they were ever held to be two *distinct Offices*. For if they had been but one and the same Office, a *re-ordination* would have been, not only needless, but altogether unlawful; and therefore, as the Ordination of a Presbyter, advances him to an Order Superior to Deacons, so, by parity of Reason, must that of a Bishop, advance him to an Order Superior to Presbyters, and make him a Member of a distinct College, from all other Ministers, or Church-Officers whatsoever. And that this was the Practice of the Church, in the Apostles Days, is acknowledg'd by your own Writers, in the * Case of *St. Paul* and *St. Barnabas*, who were *Ordain'd* according to them, having been Teachers, or Presbyters long before.

But we need not insist upon this tacit Concession of our Adversaries, in the case be-

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fore

* Acts 13. 2.

fore us: For it is no Argument of the contrary, that it is not recorded in Scripture. For neither is it not recorded there, that any *Deacon* was Ordain'd a *Presbyter*, and yet no Body can reasonably doubt of it; and we have the same Evidence in Church History for both of them: And particularly, the most ancient * *Canons*, commonly call'd *Apostolical*, presuppose this, as the common Practice of the Church, long in being before them.

Now, it can hardly be conceiv'd, how it could obtain so early and so universally, if it had not been an *Apostolick Practice*.

But for the clearing of this Argument, from the Exceptions that have been made against it, I must refer you to the Excellent Author of the *Original Draught of the Primitive Church*, p. 168. &c.

To these Reasons, from the Government and Practice of the *Primitive Church*, may be added, Thirdly, plain Evidence of Scripture. For there we find the *Apostles*, by Virtue of the Authority our *Saviour* had conferred upon them, *John* 20. verse 21. not only Ordaining and Governing *Presbyters* themselves, but conferring the same Power upon others; one Instance whereof is *Timothy*, and *Titus*; who, that they were Invested

* See Canon 1. cum Bever. Annot.

(II)

Invested with these Powers, appears from St. Paul's Directions to them about * *Ordaining* Presbyters and Deacons; *reproving*, and receiving *accusations* against Presbyters, and others; and exercising *Ecclesiastical Censures* upon Offenders. And it is Obvious to Remark, that there were several *Presbyters* then settled at *Ephesus*, and yet we find no Authority committed, and no Directions given, about the Management of it, but to *Timothy only*; which to me, is a convincing Argument, that *Presbyters* were not then possess'd of it; especially when there is no plain Evidence, either from *Timothy's* Ordination, which St. Paul mentions as perform'd by the laying on of his † *own Hands*, or his Charge || to the *Presbyters* at *Miletus*, which denotes no more than their *oversight* over the *Laity* or from any other Passage in *Holy Writ*, that any mere *Presbyter* did ever exercise these Powers, as has been clearly demonstrated by ** several learned Men.

Nor does it by any means follow, that a *Bishop* and *Presbyter* are of one and the same Order, because they have the same *Qualifications*; for *Deacons* are requir'd to have the same *Qualifications* with *Bishops*, yet no
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* 1 Tim. 5. 17, 22. Tit. 1. 5. 2. 15. † 1 Tim. 4. 14. 2 Tim. 1. 6. || Act 20. 28. †† See Mr. Thomas's reply to Mr. James Owens; and the Bish. op of Bangor his defence of Episcopacy

** 1 Tim. 3. 2, 12.

body will affirm, that they are of the same Order ; much less will it follow, because the Greek Word for *Bishop*. in Scripture, frequently denotes a *Presbyter*, that there is no difference between these *Offices* ; for if this were admitted for Reason, it would equally prove, that there is no difference between an *Emperor*, and his *General* ; for the Word, *Imperator*, is common to both of them ; or between an *Apostle*, and a *Presbyter*, for the *Apostles* themselves are often call'd *Presbyters* in Scripture, and on the reverse, as you may read, *Rom. 16. 7.*

And tho' several *general Offices* are common to *Presbyters* with *Bishops*, yet does it no where appear, that those *Peculiar Powers* of *Ordaining* and *ruling* the *Clergy*, as I have already observ'd, were ever committed to any mere *Presbyter*. And even in those *common Offices*, there was this remarkable difference between them that *Bishops* alone could perform them, by an *absolute Power*, others only by a *Power derived* from them ; and therefore in *Subordination* to, and in *Dependance* upon them.

And since we find, that these were always *distinct Offices*, it is but trifling to cavil about Words ; there being nothing more common than to observe Words, of a *general* signification at first, restrain'd afterwards to a more *particular* Meaning : An Instance whereof is the Word, *Paroikia*, which first
signifying

signifying a *Diocese*, came afterwards to denote a *Parish*. And *Things* being always before *Words*, the Episcopal Office must of necessity have been in the Church, before the general Word *Bishop*, came to signify so particularly, which was, as appears by *Ignatius's* Epistles, in a little time after the Death of the *Apostles*.

If it be objected against *Timothy* and *Titus*, that they were *Evangelists*, and *Temporary* Officers, and therefore no just *Precedent* for *Bishops*, I answer,

First, that it does not appear that any *Evangelist*, as such, could Exercise these *Offices*, but just the reverse of it. For *Philip* was an *Evangelist*, yet, when he had converted and Baptiz'd the * *Samaritans*, his Authority reaching no further, the *Apostles* are sent to lay *Hands on them*; not merely for conferring *miraculous Gifts* upon them, (for it is no way probable that these should be offer'd to a whole *City*) but either for *Confirmation*, or *Ordination* of Ministers, or both, as is most likely.

Secondly, That they might be *Evangelists*, and yet *Bishops* notwithstanding; the one, as they *Preach'd* the Gospel, and converted *Infidels*; the other, as they *Ordained* Ministers, and governed the several Churches
com-

* Acts 8.

committed to their Charge respectively: An Instance whereof is *St. Mark*, who was an *Evangelist*, in the highest Sense of the Word, and yet Supreme Church governour, or *Bishop of Alexandria*, as *Eusebius*, *St. Jerome*, and several others of the *Ancients* testify. And that they were not *Temporary Officers*, at least in this last Capacity, appears from Church History, which gives us an account of several *single Persons*, which succeeded *Timothy* in his *Episcopal Office*. And our Saviour's Promise of being with his *Apostles to the end of the World*, necessarily implies a *Succession* in these *Apostolical Powers*, for this could no otherwise be, than by their lawful Successors, and if they had Successors in *Preaching* and *Baptizing*, why not in *Governing*, and *Ordaining Ministers*, which is an Act of it?

But that this may be the more manifest still, I beg of you to consider, *Secondly*, the * *Angels of the Seven Churches* in the *Revelation*; a Name frequently used in the *Language of † Antiquity* to denote *Bishops*, and accordingly they were generally held, by both || *Ancients and Moderns*, to be the *Bishops of those Churches*: And to confirm this †† *Opinion*, the best *Historians* agree, that *Polycarp* was one of them.

* *Rev. 1. 2. 3. Ch.* † *Bingham's Antiquity vol. 1st.* †† *Pool's Synopsis, Bilson perpetual Government.* †† *A.B. Usher, Cave, Dupin.*

them. And we have an account of several other Bishops, in these Places, at least very near this time: Which, together with the *Epistles* inscribed to each of them, in the *Singular Number*, clearly proves that they were not a *collective Body*, but *particular Persons*. And that they were not *Temporary Officers*, in the nature of a *President* in Council, or a *Chairman* in an Assembly, is no less Evident, because, besides that, they were *Officers for Life*, we find * here the *care of the Churches* committed to them, and the *Faults* of other Persons, *Clergy* as well as *Laity*, laid to their Charge; which plainly evince their *Episcopal Authority*. For how could they be accountable, for the *Doctrines* and *Practices* of any, but such as had been *Ordained* by them, or were at least, committed to their *Care* and *Government*? And here by the *By*, we have a plain Instance of *fixed Bishops*. †

Lastly, to Obviate an Objection commonly made by your Party; (*viz.*) that a *Scripture Bishop* is no more than a *Minister of a single Congregation*, I shall add one Instance more of this Kind, and that is *St. James Bishop of Jerusalem*, as he was constantly reputed to be, in all Ages since. And this may

* *Rev. 2. 10. 15. 20.* † For further satisfaction upon this Head you may consult a late excellent Tract Entitled an account of Church Government and Governours.

may be gathered from his *presiding* in the *Council* held there, in which several of the Apostles were present ; from St. Paul's naming him before St. Peter and St. John, the leading Men among the Apostles, and * mentioning the Brethren that came from *Him* to *Antioch*; and particularly, from the account we have of him with his Presbyters, in the 21st of the *Acts*. And when we consider the vast number of Christians in this great City, how, no less than *five Thousand*, were Converted at one Sermon, with the *three Thousand* that had been converted before, and those prodigious Multitudes that were afterwards successively added to them, as you may read in the *Second, Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Chapters* of the *Acts*: It cannot in reason be supposed, that all these made no more than a *single Congregation*; especially, when they had not the Temple, or any other publick Place to meet in, but held their Assemblies in private Houses, as may be gathered from the account we have of their *breaking bread from House to House*. But for further satisfaction in this Matter, I refer you to Dr. H. Maurice against Mr. Clarkson; and shall only add, that if a Bishop, at that time, was no more than a Presbyter now, *there must have been a change in the Government of the Church*, which, to assert

assert is groundless and unreasonable, as I have already proved.

Upon the whole, I think it plainly appears from *Scripture*, that *Bishops* are an Order superior to *Presbyters*, by *Apostolical Institution*: For tho' we have no express command for this distinct superior Order in the Ministry; yet have we the same Authority for it, that we have for the Christian Ministry it self, viz. the general Scope and Tenor of the New Testament.

But admit we had not incontestable Evidence of *Scripture* for Bishops, yet shou'd you acquiesce in it; for I am fully perswaded, that you admit of some *Institutions*, upon no more than equal Evidence of *Scripture*, as *Infant Baptism*, and the *Lord's Day*; and others upon far less, if any *Scripture* Evidence at all, as your *Lay Elders*, *Classes* and *Synods*: And it is unreasonable to demand a more express account of this Matter, before the full Settlement of Churches, which the *Acts* of the Apostles, the only sacred History we have of these Times, give us no Intimations of.

Nay, had it not been recorded in *Scripture*, since it was a Matter of *Fact*, and as such easily apprehended, and by it's constant use, as easily transmitted to Posterity; This would have been no more a just exception against *Episcopal Government*, than it is against the *Canonical Books* of Holy Writ;

but this we only *barely suppose*, but by no means grant, having already, I conceive, abundantly proved the contrary.

And as it appears from *Scripture*, that our *Saviour* committed the Government of the Church to his *Apostles*, and that they delegated that *Ordinary part* of their Authority to particular Persons, who were since distinguished by the Name of *Bishops*; such as *Timothy*, and *Titus*, the *Angels* of the *Seven Churches*, &c. so have we,

Fourthly, The whole current of *Antiquity* to attest this *Succession* of single Persons, in the Government of the Church, with a particular account of those that succeeded the *Apostles*, in all the Churches that we have any Records of; which, since it is not consistent with my intended Brevity, to give you a just Narrative of, I must refer you to *Bishop Bilson's Perpetual Government*, and only lay before you these three following Hints.

Eusebius, In his History, gives us a large Catalogue of Bishops, and reckons up several Successions of them, from the Apostles down to his own time; and * *Tertullian*, long before him, appeals to these Successions, as what the very *Hereticks* themselves could not deny; And,

Irenæus,

* De Prescription.

Irenæus, who convers'd with *Polycarp*, *St. John's Disciple*, * says expressly, *That the Apostles left them their Successors, and delivered up to them their own Authority and Jurisdiction*, and all this without the least Intimation of any other form of Church-Government.

Hence it is, that *Bishops* were anciently call'd *Apostles*, the *Apostles Successors*, the *Off-spring* of the *Apostolical Seed*; and their *Sees*, *Sedes Apostolicæ*, as is proved at large by † *Mr. Bingham*, in his *Christian Antiquities*. Now it seems unaccountable, how these eminent *Titles* and *Characters* came to be thus appropriated to particular Persons in Contradistinction to the rest of the *Clergy*, if other *Ministers*, that belong'd to their respective *Churches*, had in every respect, the same *spiritual Powers* and *Prerogatives in common with them*. And doubtless, they must mean something more by these *Bishops* than mere *Presbyters*; for it is an undeniable Observation, that no *Presbyter* was called by that Name, by any *Writers of these Ages*. || And tho' *Bishops* have been, by some few of them, call'd *Presbyters*; it cannot be inferred thence, that they took them

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both

* B. 3. c. 3. † Vol. 1st. || It is observ'd by the learned *Bishop Pearson*, that they never make use of this Expression to denote *Bishops*, when either they recount the different Orders in the Ministry, or speak of any of the superior Order in *their own time*.

both for one and the same Order : For since we find them *elsewhere* plainly *distinguish'd*, it may be reasonably suppos'd they were styl'd so, either upon the Account of their *Age*, in regard, they were generally Persons of *advanced Years*, or to denote their *Authority*, as *Church-Governours*, according to the general Import and Signification of the Word *Presbyter*. And no better Grounds have you to infer this, from that noted Expression of *St. Ignatius*, of the *one Altar*, and *one Bishop*. For the manifest Drift and Purport of it, is to recommend *Unity*, and condemn *Schisms* and *Divisions* in the Church. And, * by the Word *Altar*, the *Antients* undoubtedly meant no other than the *Comunion Table*, in the *Cathedral*, or *Mother Church*; where the *Bishop* had his *See*, and to which all the *Clergy* of his *Diocese* then belong'd, who liv'd in a Body with him, and were *thence* deputed to officiate in other Places; there being no *Ministers* fixed upon *particular* Congregations, till some *Ages* after.

Now this is no more inconsistent with the *subordinate Altars*, or *Churches*, than the *Jewish Temple* (in Allusion to which, it is thought to be spoken) was with the *Synagogues*.

But, suppose a *Bishop* anciently had but one *Congregation* (the Reverse of which has been

* See Mr. Dodwell de uno Altari, and Mr. Mede's Works P. 326.

been often unanswerably proved) yet, it by no means follows, that he was no more than a *mere Presbyter*. For it is not in the *number* of Souls committed to his Charge, but the *Powers* and *Privileges*, vested in him, that constitute a *Bishop*, a *distinct Order* in the Church.

And it is so far from being *Essential* to the *Episcopal Office*, to have *several Congregations* under his Care, that we read of sundry *Persons*, invested with that sacred *Character*, that at first had *scarce any Congregation at all* to superintend, till they had converted those they were sent to, to the *Christian Faith*: As was the Case of *Gregory of Neo-cesarea*, *Moses*, &c. And therefore it imports you to prove, if you would Advance any thing to your purpose upon this Head, not that some Bishops had at first no more than one *Congregation*, for this no body can doubt in some places, upon the first Conversion of *Infidels*; but that the Number of Converts afterwards amounting to several Congregations, they could be no longer one Church, but must of necessity be form'd into so many distinct, and *Independent Societies*, under proper Ministers that were equally independent of, and unaccountable to any Superior Church Officer upon Earth; which I humbly conceive, is a direct contradiction to all the Monuments of Scripture and Antiquity in reference to this Matter; but to return from these

these occasional Reflections: It is of no weight against this *Succession*, that the *Apostles* were *unsettled*; for so may *Bishops* lawfully be, when the Occasions of the Church require it, as *Lupus* and *Germanus*, two French *Bishops* came over hither, when *Pelagius* had infected the *Britains* with his Heresy: Besides, that this is not universally true of them, as appears from St. *James's* constant Residence at *Jerusalem*. Nor that they were Persons of extraordinary Endowments; for no Body maintains, that *Bishops* succeeded the *Apostles* in their extraordinary Capacity, but in that ordinary lasting part of their Office, the Power of Ordination and spiritual Jurisdiction; in which respect, the *Apostles* themselves are often call'd *Bishops* by the Ancients.

And if their extraordinary Endowments were an Argument against this *Succession*, it would equally destroy all Church Powers; for they were Persons thus gifted, that at first exercis'd every one of them: And were it otherwise, how can you think their *unsettledness*, or extraordinary Endowments should affect this *Succession*, when your own *Ministers* lay claim to it notwithstanding? Nor,

Lastly, Is the unlimited Power of the *Apostles* any better Argument against this *Succession*. For the Office may be the same tho' the extent of Power be more in one than in another;

another; as the Bishop of *Engubium* was as real a Bishop, as the Bishop of *Rome*: Besides, that every Bishop is a Bishop of the *universal Church*, and as such, may, upon necessary Occasions, discharge his Office in any part of it, as we have sundry Instances of this Kind in *Church-History*. But, admit this were an extraordinary Privilege of the Apostles, it can be no Proof against a Succession, in the ordinary part of their Office, which is all that we contend for. And as for the *uninterruptedness* of this Succession, especially in the *Church of England*, it has been so often, and so satisfactorily vindicated by *learned Men, that it is unaccountable to me how any should call it in Question. Here it may be demanded if Bishops are the Apostles Successors exclusive of all others, in that eminency of Power belonging to 'em as such, how can Presbyters be said to stand in the place of the Apostles? To which I Answer, that when this is said of them, the Bishop in the very same Passage is said to stand in the place of Christ, which is a manifest indication, of his Superiority and Pre-eminence over them, and therefore this must be spoken of them only.

Lastly, we have a *Prescription* of above Fifteen Hundred Years for this Right of Bishops, founded

* Mr. Mason, Mr. Brown, Mr. Johnson, Dr. Fiddes, &c.

founded upon the same Historical Evidence, and the same *Catholick Tradition* that we have for the *Books of Scripture*; during which Time, so universally did the Episcopal Government obtain in the World that the whole Body of *Christians*, even the *Hereticks*, and *Schismaticks* themselves were governed by *them*; who, tho' widely differing from the Church, and each other, upon several other Heads, yet, amidst that strange variety of *Sects* and *Perfwasions*, were * generally agreed in this, that Bishops were the Supreme spiritual Governors both of Clergy and Laity, within their respective Dioceses, and no Ordinations were to be allow'd of, but such as they were concern'd in. And when some of the *foreign reformed Churches*, chang'd this *primitive Form of Church-Government*, † they have generally own'd, at first, That it was owing to *pure Necessity*; and several worthy Members of them have since wish'd, that they might be govern'd by *Bishops*.

And to let you see, how unreasonable those deluded People are, who condemn this Government as *unlawful* and *Antichristian*, we have the Testimony of the most eminent Men, in *all these Churches*, in favour of

* You may see what your Writers have advanc'd to the contrary about the *Culdee's* and the *Waldenses*, clearly disprov'd by Bishop *Lloyd* in his *Historical Account*, and Mr. *Thomas*, in his forecited Reply to Mr. *J. Owens's* Plea. † See the Judgment of the foreign Reformed Churches.

of it; as may be seen at large in Mr. Durell's *View of the Government of the reformed Churches beyond Sea*. Among these, the *Bohemians*, or *Moravians* (as we read in *Comenius's History*) formerly thought the *Episcopal Government* so *absolutely necessary*, that, having lost their *Bishops* by the *Popish Persecution*, and fearing that an *Ordination* by *Presbyters* might not be *lawful*, they sent three of their *Ministers* to the *Waldenses*, to be ordain'd *Bishops*, that by that Means they might have *Episcopal Orders* continued among them, as appears from the *Sequel of that History*.

To which, let me add an *Epistle* written by the *Ministers of Geneva*, not many Years since, to the *University of Oxford*; wherein they express their intire Approbation of our *Episcopal Government*, and how joyfully they wou'd receive it, were they but in a *Condition* so to do.

In a Word, we have the *Testimony*, as of the other ancient *Fathers*, so, of † *St. Jerome* himself in favour of *Bishops*, who expressly stiles them, the *Apostles Successors*; appropriates the *Power of Ordination* to them, and derives their *Original* from the *Apostles*, calling their Government an *Apo-*
D
stolical

* See Mr. Brookesby, of the *Primitive Government of the Church*; And Bishop *Pearson's Vind. Ign.* † *Epist. ad Evagrium Com in Titum.*

stolical Tradition, and lastly, affirms, that the *three Orders of Bishops, Priests and Deacons* in the Church, answer to *Aaron*, and his *Sons*, and *Levites* in the Temple; thereby plainly intimating, as the earliest Fathers of the Church had done before him, that the Christian Ministry was Modell'd after the Temple Priest-hood, and not the Synagogue Ministry, which our Adversaries contend for, by way of Analogy or resemblance, because they bear the same relation to their Bishops, that the Apostles bore to our Saviour, whilst he liv'd upon Earth, during which time they were only his Presbyters, and had not the Power of Ordination and Church Government, which were afterwards committed to 'em; for had Presbyters been the Apostles Successors in these peculiar and reserv'd Powers, why were not their Names inserted in the Catalogues of Church Governors transmitted down to us? and how comes but one only in a Church to be refer'd to, as deriving his Succession from the Apostles, if others; in it had equally Succeeded to the same Office? But to proceed, And therefore this *Episcopal Government* cannot be a Creature of the *Civil Power*, as some have falsely suggested; for we find *Bishops* long in Being, before we read of any *Christian Princes* to give them their Authority: And since their embracing the *Christian Faith*, how could they confer upon others.

others, what they were never possess'd of themselves? It is then their *Temporalities only*, not their *spiritual Powers*, that they owe to *their Favour*, which, even when depriv'd of, they are as *real Bishops* as before.

And so far is this *Government* from being *Popish*, as it has been misrepresented, to prejudice ignorant People against it, that the *School-Men*, and the *Pope's Creatures* in the Council of *Trent*, were the first Men, after the *Heretick Acrius*, that held your Doctrine of *Parity*.

And no better appearance of Reason have you to represent *our Bishops*, as a *distinct Species* from *those* of the *Primitive Church*. For tho' they enjoy certain *temporal Powers* and *Advantages*, by the *favour* of our *Princes*, which the latter could not be possess'd of, whilst the Church was in a State of *Persecution*, yet in regard these are *purely accidental* to their *Episcopal Office*, they cannot make an *Essential Difference* between them.

To apply this to our own Case, and speak a little more home to my present Purpose.

Since it is allow'd on all Hands, that there must be a *Government* in the Church; since in every Government, Reason requires that there should be some *Subordination* between its Members, to prevent *Disorder* and *Confusion*; since the *Episcopal Government* is so

highly agreeable with *Reason, Scripture, and Antiquity*; since the *Bishops*, as such, claim, no other Authority, but what is absolutely necessary to the Church in all Ages, and was plainly deriv'd to them from the *Apostles*, as *Theirs* was from our Saviour, who authoriz'd them to govern his Church, and constitute *Succeffors* to themselves, as appears from his own express Words, * *As my Father hath sent me, so send I you*; since, lastly, all Churches in the World were govern'd by them, till the *Reformation*, and we of this Nation have these *Primitive-Church Governors* still continued among us; it deserves Consideration, how those who have not only withdrawn themselves from their Government, but set up *opposite Churches*, and Officers, or joyn with them, can be acquitted from acting against *lawful Authority*; and whether it be not far safer to submit to their Government?

For though we should suppose those *peculiar Powers*, which have been so long vested in *Bishops*, were originally common to *Presbyters*, which is all that you contend for, yet, even in that Case, we stand upon equal Terms of Security. For thus to limit the Exercise of them to *particular Persons*, for the preventing

* John 20. 21.

preventing of Divisions, and the Preservation of Order and Regularity in the Church, is confessedly lawful in it self, and consonant to your own Practice: And therefore cannot be thought to violate the Institution, or null the Administration of them; whereas, if the Episcopal Order be of divine Institution with these reserved Powers Originally vested in it, as (I think) is sufficiently proved; by opposing of it, you, in Effect, strive against God, and do, what in you lieth, to annul and cancel his divine Ordinance.

And your Ministers are guilty of the highest Usurpation, by Exercising those spiritual Powers, which do not of right belong to 'em, as having no lawful Commission for it: Whence it may be reasonably question'd, whether their Administrations are not null and invalid, and in Consequence thereof, whether you have not more Reason to doubt of your having been Baptiz'd, according to Christ's Institution, than for any scruple whatever, upon which you separate from the Establish'd Church.

Certainly, The Practice of the universal Church, so directly opposite to yours, for about 1500 Years, with the Decrees of several of the most Authentick Councils, in reference to this Matter, must be allow'd to be abundant Grounds of Suspicion to any rational Man, that will but seriously and impartially reflect upon it. Indeed, some of the

the *foreign reformed* Churches, have pleaded *necessity* for their irregular Ordinations, which, how far it may be allow'd of, is not my business to enquire; But this cannot so much as be pretended to in your Case: And therefore whatever *Allowances* may be made in Favour of them, your Condition will be equally dangerous notwithstanding, besides that, whereas it was undoubtedly certain, and confess'd on all Hands, that Bishops are invested with the Power of Ordination; and consequently that our Ministers are duely Commission'd, and all their Administrations Just and Valid; it is at least very much to be doubted, for the reasons above mention'd, that no other Order of Men have this Power committed to 'em: And therefore you can never have a well grounded assurance of the lawful Mission of your Ministers; whence it plainly follows, that if you regard your safety and security, you must adhere to our Bishops, and such as derive their Commission from them, before any Persons amongst you that are set up in opposition to 'em.

But, waving the further Prosecution of this Argument, I proceed, *Secondly*, to lay before you your Obligation to return to the *Communion of the establish'd Church*; and this, I humbly conceive, will appear from the following Considerations.

Every *Christian* is a Member of the Church of *Christ*; every Member is oblig'd to hold *external Communion* with that part of *Christ's Church*, where it can be *lawfully* had, for the publick Worship of God, and Profession of our Religion: Now, this you may *lawfully* do; with the *Establish'd Church* of *England*. For, that it enjoyns no *sinful* Terms of Communion, has been sufficiently proved by Mr. *Hooker*, Dr. *Faulkner*, and others; is own'd by all the *Reformed Churches* beyond Sea, by whom it has been justly esteem'd the chief Prop and Glory of the Reformation, and by the more knowing, and *moderate Men* of your * own Party; and your Practice of repairing *occasionally* to our Assemblies, plainly shews you to be of the same Opinion, otherwise you could never do it without offering violence to your own Conventions. Whence it necessarily follows, that you are oblig'd in *Conscience*, constantly to join in Communion with it, because you cannot lawfully join with any *seperate Congregations*, that have withdrawn themselves from it; for this would be making a *rent* in this part of *Christ's Church*, contrary to your Duty of *promoting* * *Peace*, and *Unity therein*; joyning with *Separatists* and

* You may see abundance of your own Authors quoted by Dr. *Bennet*, in his Abridgment of the *London Cases*.

and partaking of their Sin, who by *St. Jude*, are reputed sensual *having not the Spirit*, instead of *avoiding such as cause Divisions*, as † *St. Paul* enjoyns. To be convinc'd of the heinousness whereof, you need only consider that they are generally the effect of Pride, and uncharitableness, the Cause of Animosities and Contentions, the Means of encouraging Offenders, hindring Discipline, and impairing the Strength both of Church and State, and thereby giving our Common Enemies an Advantage over us; with the remarkable Punishment of *Cora*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram*, upon this very Score. Accordingly, this the || *Ancient Fathers* condemn'd, as the most dismal and dangerous Condition; and the *Primitive Christians* dreaded as the most terrible Judgment, who would undergo any shame or trouble, that they might be restor'd to Communion; is it not a strange Instance then of Prejudice and Infatuation, for any Person to make so wretched a Choice? Nay, should you not in all reason abstain from it, even tho' you had only bare grounds of Suspicion that this might prove your Case? How much more, having the concurrent Testimony of Scripture, Reason, and Antiquity in Proof of it?

And

* Ephes. 4. v. 3. † Rom. 16. v. 17. || See the Original Draught, p. 350. &c.

And here, for your further Conviction, I beseech you to consider, besides the* Conformity of this Church, with *Scripture* and *Antiquity*, both in Matters of *Faith*, and in the *Essentials* of Church Government and divine Worship, its Settlement in these Kingdoms, by all sorts of *lawful Authority*, both *Civil* and *Ecclesiastical*, which the Apostles *St. Peter* and *St. Paul* strictly enjoyn *Obedience* and *Submission* to; and therefore cannot be disobey'd, without a manifest breach of our Duty.

Nor will the *Act* of *Toleration* acquit you from this *Guilt*, because this is no more than an *Exemption* from the *Penalties*, which by the *Laws* of the *Land*, you were *before* subject to, design'd for the benefit of *scrupulous Consciences*.

For since the *Acts* of *Uniformity*, with several *Royal Proclamations*, still remain in *force* and *unrepealed*, no Power upon Earth can *Dispense* with your *Obedience* to them, because no human *Act* can *dispense* with the *Laws* of *God*, which enjoyn this *Obedience*; especially, since your *Disobedience* is attended with the breach of other *Duties*, as want of *Charity*, *Moderation*, and that due *Regard* which you owe to the *publick Peace* and *Happiness*, as has been undeniably

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* Bishop Bull's Vindication of the Church of England, p. 168, &c.

deniably proved by the present *Bishop of Bangor*, in an excellent small Tract of his, entitled, *A Perswasive to Lay-Conformity*.

But that your *Separation* may appear the more *inexcusable* still, I shall briefly shew you, that your common *Pleas* will by no means justify it.

First, *Not Corruption in Practice, or some unfundamental Errors in Doctrine, only tolerated, and not enjoyn'd*; for these are not *Sins* in us, as long as we do not joyn with the corrupted Members in them; and that we may, and ought to *communicate* with such in the *publick Offices* of Devotion, appears from the Consideration of the *Jewish Church*, in the time of the *Sons of Eli*; the *Seven Churches* in the *Revelation*, and that of *Corinth*, which, tho' very much corrupted, yet was *Separation* so far from being allowable, upon that Score, that we find *St. Paul* expressly condemning *Divisions* in the last of them.

And indeed, were you bound to *separate* from every Church, where any *Errors, Abuses, or Corruptions* are, I dare say, there is not a Church upon Earth you cou'd joyn in *Communion* with; for there is none, on this side Heaven, free from them: And accordingly, the *Protestants* of the *opposite Confessions*, have often express'd their readiness to communicate with the *Lutherans*, notwithstanding their *Errors of Ubiquity, and Consubstantiation*.

Secondly

Secondly, *Not enjoying a more profitable Ministry, or living under a more pure Discipline*, for this plain Reason, because we are not to *commit Sin*, for promoting a *good End*; for no pretence of good Ends can justify what is forbidden by God; as *Schism*, or a *causeless Separation*, is allowed on all Hands to be. Tho' I am so far from granting, that you have any *just Grounds* for this Objection, that I am verily persuaded, the *publick Worship* of God is as well provided for, and all the necessary Points of *Doctrin* and *Practice*, is *advantageously* set forth, and *powerfully* recommended, under the *Ministry* of this Church, as in any other whatsoever.

And if we have not that *primitive Discipline*, which is so much *wished for*, it can be ascribed to nothing more than the unhappy *Seſts* and *Divisions* we have amongst us: However, it is unreasonable to condemn the *Constitution* it self, for the *personal Neglects* and *Abuses* of it, which are common to all Churches.

Thirdly, *Not Imposition of Forms, or Ceremonies neither commanded nor forbidden in Scripture*. For nothing is unlawful, but what is a *Breach* of some Command; and as long as *they* are lawful in themselves, how can their being *enjoyed* by just *Authority*, make them *unlawful*?

For, That it is the Province of the Civil

Magistrate, who is the *Guardian of both Tables*, with the concurrence of *Church-Officers*, to concern himself in regulating the *Circumstantials of Religious Worship*, appears from the approved *Practice of the Jewish Kings and Christian Emperors*. And since both *Reason and Scripture* require *Order and Decency* in the *Worship of God*, and for this End, some *indifferent things* must necessarily be determin'd; it is plain, there is a *Power*, lodg'd in some *Hands* for this Purpose, and this doubtless none can lay a juster claim to, than our *lawful Superiors*: And, if they may *lawfully* determine some *indifferent things*, by parity of Reason, they must have the same Power in any others of that Kind; *provided*, they tend to *Order and Decency* in the *Church*, which (it may be reasonably suppos'd) *they themselves are the best Judges of*.

And accordingly, we have the * *publick Confessions and Practice of other Churches*, nay, the *Practice of your own Party*, with respect to the *Directory*, to confirm this *Doctrine*. So that there is scarce one Church upon Earth that can be communicated with upon your principles, there being none of all the foreign Churches, that does not require the Compliance of its Members with some Rites and Observances of this Kind.

And

* See the forecited Mr. Durel's View.

And certainly if there be any *Authority* at all, *in*, or *over* the *Church* (and it is unaccountable, how it can be a *regular Society* without it) it must extend to these things, they being the least (*conceivable*) subject Matter that it can be exercis'd upon.

But, admit it were a Matter of *reasonable Doubt*, whether our *Governours* are possess'd of this *Power*, or no; yet, even in that Case, you should obey them in all their *lawful Commands*, according to that known *Maxim* of *Casuists*. *In a doubt, the safest side is always to be follow'd.* Nay, tho' they had no *Authority* at all in *religious Matters*, the bare Consideration of the *publick Peace* and *Happiness*, should determine you to pay them this *Obedience*, as manifestly outweighing all the *Inconveniencies* that can be suppos'd to accrue, from such a compliance with our *lawful Superiors*.

In a Word, for the use of *Forms*, we have sufficient Warrant from sundry * *Precedents* of this Kind, both in the *Old* and *New Testament*, back'd with the concurrent Practice of the † *Jewish* and *Christian Church* in all Ages; even the *Presbyterians* themselves, in all other Dominions, *unanimously* agreeing in

* See Dr. King, of the Inventions of Men in the Worship of God. Mr. Bingham's Antiquities Vol. 4th and 5th. His Apology of the *French Church*, for the Church of *England*. Durel's View.

† Dr. Prioleux's Connection, &c. p. 375. 8vo. Edit.

in the use of them. And no Christian Writer, for ought appears, ever question'd them as unwarrantable for near upon Sixteen Hundred Years; and as for our own Form of Divine Worship, in particular, it is so far from being justly exceptionable, that it has been esteem'd by unprejudiced Persons, and those very competent Judges as the most excellent Liturgy in the whole Christian World, as might be proved by unquestionable Authorities. And by condemning our *Ceremonies*, as *unlawful Impositions*, you condemn not only the *Primitive Church*, but those foreign *Reformed Churches* which now use them, the old *Puritans*, and even the *leading Men* of your own Party, who in the * *Conference at Hampton Court*, have allow'd of those which you most except against, as both *Lawful* and *Primitive*.

And it is observable, that all the foreign *Protestant Churches* which want *these*, are so far from condemning their *Brethren* upon this Score, that they do not scruple to hold *Communion* with them and us notwithstanding. And if it be not *lawful* for one *National Church*, to separate from the *Communion* of another, upon the account of these *indifferent Rites and Ceremonies*, much less can it be so, for *private Persons* to separate from

* *Baker's Chronicle in the Life of King James.*

from the *Communion* of that *Church* to which they belong; which is so highly unreasonable, that (I believe) *History* affords no Instance of this Kind, in any other Country whatsoever.

Is it not strange then, that these should be made a *Plea* for *Separation*, when they are so far from being impos'd upon us, as *Parts* of Religion, that they are really no more than mere *Circumstances* of it; confessedly indifferent in themselves, and alterable by the same *Authority* that first enjoyn'd them? Especially when they are so few in Number, and so generally approv'd of, that most of the Christian World agree in them, any Just Reason be assign'd, why you should entertain Scruples, upon this Head, and yet make no Scruples of disobeying Authority, rending the Church, and separating from the publick Assemblies, in breach of a known and indisputable Duty. Certainly our Saviour and his *Apostles* were of a very different Judgment from you in this Matter; for we have several Instances of their Compliance with *Jewish Rites* and *Observances*, tho' but of human Institution: As in observing the Feast of Dedication, the Posture of eating the Passover, joining in their Synagogue, and Temple Worship, &c? But these are so obvious, that it is needless to be more particular in so plain a Case.

Nor

Nor will it stand you in any stead, that you Act according to the *Dictates* of your Consciences. For you *Sin*, in following them, as well as in *acting* against them, whilst they are *Erroneous*; as you know St. Paul did when he persecuted the *Christians*, tho' he thought he did God Service. And therefore, your Duty in this Case is, to use the best means you can, to undeceive and disabuse your self, which, if but duly performed, I dare say you'll soon be convinc'd as others have been before you, that your Error is not invincible, and consequently not to be pleaded in excuse for your Separation.

But for further satisfaction upon these Heads, &c. I refer you to Dr. Bennet's *Abridgment*; and shall only add my Prayers: That God would give us a right Understanding in all things, with that just Sense of our Duty, in our several Stations and Capacities, That we may all of us seriously study and think of those things that make for the Peace and Unity of his Church. Amen.

F I N I S.



